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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, December 31, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "This Job of Homemaking." From articles in Good Housekeeping Magazine and the Parents' Magazine.

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When the thirty-first of December rolls around each year, most of us are likely to become a bit thoughtful and even sentimental over the year that is ending. Even if we're awfully busy stirring up the cake or the pudding for tomorrow, even if the twins insist on riding their new tricycles round and round the dining room table, even if Cousin Bill has to be watched or he'll absent-mindedly be emptying his pipe in our best new flower bowl--even with any or all these distractions, most of us find time to consider the year that is past. Memories today. Resolutions tomorrow.

What about the past year? Was it a happy and satisfactory one on the whole? And this job of ours, this big job of homemaking, did it go well? Or does it frequently seem so dull and discouraging that you wish you had escaped to Hollywood at an early age and become a movie star before you started house-keeping?

Let's check up on that job today. Let's think over the things that may make it the most cheering and satisfying occupation in contrast to the things that make it discouraging.

Years ago I heard a very wise elderly homemaker discuss this subject with a girl about to be married. And I've never forgotten it.

"Start out," she said, "with the idea that home is the kingdom for you to govern both with your heart and your head. Before marriage you are the center of the stage, but afterward your part is more subtle and more exacting. There's another personality on the stage and interests must be shared. It isn't long before a clever wife learns to be manager of both men and menus."

This lady then went on to mention one of the problems of almost every housewife, young or old--finances. Many brides complain somewhat sadly that the first step in married life seems to be from wedding bells to budgets. To keep this step from being a jolt and a jar, a ways and means committee before marriage is often most helpful. Talk over expense plans early and get your future partner's point of view on spending. Working out a careful budget for the new home has many advantages. Chief among them is the fact that it demonstrates so many things about spending in proportion to your income and scale of living. So much for food, so much for rent or upkeep, so much for miscel-

lanies and for clothes, so much for savings or future spendings--that's the way the budget goes. And, of course, it must be adjusted to your individual needs. With the aid of a simple account sheet and checkbook stubs, you can start out as a business executive and be the business partner of the man of the house on this spending business. That's a big step gained in happiness and understanding. Instead of hurt feelings over unexpected bills or long arguments over how much it costs to run a house, both husband and wife will understand and agree over the division of the income.

"Cooperation is the one thing necessary for successful and happy budgeting even on the smallest income.

A second cause of happiness or unhappiness which my friend mentioned was the matter of freedom.

Someone has said that home is the last remaining free place. The reason that husbands stay home is never a matter of tie; it's a matter of freedom. One of the biggest secrets of homemaking, lies in respecting the individual rights of the different members of the family. You have your own kitchen, your own dressing table and your own desk. You are enjoying every day creating a home, making it more comfortable, more beautiful, more expressive of yourself. See to it that the man of the house also has his individuality preserved. See to it also that every child has some part of the house for his very own.

One rule well worth remembering all through married life, said my friend, "is to give your husband privacy when he wants it. Even if it's only a corner of the room with his desk, his bookshelves and his private chair, it should actually be his. Never mind how it looks. That corner can somehow be given the masculine feeling if it is full of your husband's prized possessions and it will become to him a symbol of his freedom."

Details are worth considering. Having his own hooks in the closet may be a most important matter to some husbands. The orderly kind likes his belongings, his shirts, his socks, his ties, collars and handkerchiefs neatly piled in his own drawers ready for a quick change. It won't make him at all happy if he find lingerie and long silk stockings all tangled up with his golf socks.

There's a fine little poem that illustrates what I've been trying to explain about the need we all have of a place and possessions of our own. Here's the way it goes!

"And I give a loving glance as I go
To three brass pots on a shelf in a row,
To my grandfather's grandfathers' loving cup
And a bandy-legged chair I once picked up.
But I can't for the life of me make you see
Why just these things are a part of me."

Freedom and privacy, common sense and discretion, are great helps to pleasant home life. This reminds me of a story told by a mother in Texas whose little boy was always asking questions. One day he inquired, "What do people say when they get married, Mother?"

"Oh," said his mother, "they promise to love and be kind to each other."

The small son thought this over for some minutes. Then he looked up at his mother and said, "You're not always married, are, you, Mother?"

There are certain practical considerations that help keep the household wheels turning smoothly and make the housekeeper's job a happier one. Remember that good old slogan, "First plan your work. Then work your plan?" That will prevent work from piling up ahead of you. Plan your daily cleaning tasks, for example, so you'll know which comes after which. Arrange your marketing and your menus well ahead. That will make for more variety and interest in your meals. If you are doing your own work and like to entertain, keep your parties simple and plan the preparation of your company meals well ahead of time, so that you won't be worried and flurried the last half hour before serving. And keep your kitchen as well as yourself, progressive. Whenever you think of any change that could be made to make the kitchen more convenient, be sure to do it. Even a new hook back by the stove or a new little shelf under the sink may add a great deal to your comfort.

You can often lighten your work considerably by letting your refrigerator aid you early in the day. Right after breakfast you can prepare part of your meals and then set them in the refrigerator ready to cook later. This leaves the day free for other things.

Last, but not least, make it a point before you sit down to a meal with the family to get yourself into a genial, cheerful mood, no matter what has happened during the day. When the food is served on the table, and you slip off your apron, slip off your work-a-day mood at the same time. The dress under the apron can always be trim, and fresh, even if it's an old one. And don't forget that a final brush to the hair, a glance at the hands and a bit of powder may make a great deal of difference in your appearance. Housekeeping need never mar your looks nor your disposition, if you go at it in the right way.

Tomorrow: "Resolutions on New Year's Day."

